



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

TKac  
T38

JP



~~DEPOSITED AT THE  
HARVARD FOREST  
1943~~

RETURNED TO J.E.  
MARCH, 1967

*Thomson.*

*Adirondack.*

*Pam 1884.*

AN ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

ALBANY INSTITUTE

ON THE

ADIRONDACK WILDERNESS,

BY

LEMON THOMSON

MARCH 18, 1884.

ALBANY:

WEED, PARSONS AND COMPANY, PRINTERS

1884.

Wed July 1912

27039

# ADIRONDACK WILDERNESS.

---

## INTRODUCTION.

GENTLEMEN OF THE INSTITUTE — It is with no little embarrassment that I attempt to speak this evening to your Institute upon the subject of the Adirondack wilderness. I fully realize that it would well become me to be silent in an association including, as this does, so many scientists and scholars — so many able and learned men.

I can assure you that I do not at all fail to appreciate that the necessity of an Adirondack park has been thoroughly considered by our ablest scholars and greatest statesmen. The governor has made it an important part of his annual message. The State departments have discussed it in their official reports. Both Houses of the Legislature have gravely considered the subject, and some of their statesmen and orators in warning against the dangers of delay, and in painting the advantages of a great park have made the greatest efforts of their lives. The newspapers have been full of this subject, and have rung the changes so many times and in so many ways that the people have become bewildered — they seem not to know what is the truth, or what is the danger, or what is the remedy.

## THE SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE.

The most that I can promise will be to give you some of my observations in this region and a few well authenticated facts. I was born and reared to manhood within what is now proposed to make an Adirondack park. My home was almost within the shadow of Old Crane mountain which lifts its head nearly three thousand feet above the level of the plain. Long before the sound or echo of the lumberman's axe had ever been heard in this region, the beautiful forest which had once covered the summit of this moun-

tain had been burned to the ground — the soil being consumed and the rocks laid bare, and thus they remain until this day. I have often climbed its rugged sides to the very summit and gathered blue-berries in the crevices of the rocks. What is true of the top of Old Crane mountain is true of the top of most of the other mountains in that region. In my boyhood days I have wandered through the forests, over the logs and among the brush in hunting the sable, the fox, the deer, the panther and the bear. I have clambered through the marshes, and followed up the streams in trapping the mink, the muskrat and the otter. Many a day have I spent in gathering the speckled trout from the limpid waters of creeks and ponds, and brought them home to listen to the unwelcome command of my mother, "that you must not bring any more fish here unless you dress them."

In my more mature years I have traced old lines — traversed the forests and climbed the mountains, in locating timber lots, and in overseeing the cutting and gathering together the valuable timber scattered through these regions. Such has been my experience. I have never gone forth with guides hired at the expense of the State to carry my provisions and to locate and build my shanties and my fires. I have never obtained knowledge by the use of thermometer, or the barometer, or the transit, or the theodolite. For nearly sixty years I have observed the deep snows of winter, and the heavy freshets of spring, and the drouth and low water of summer — some years more and some years less. No Elijah has arisen, with a prophetic gift, by which he could look into the inscrutable ways of Providence and predict in advance the beginning or continuance or ending of any freshet or drouth, but as I remember now, and fifty years ago, there seems to be but little difference. Nature, like history, seems to repeat itself.

#### WHO DESIRES AN ADIRONDACK PARK.

For the last ten or fifteen years there has been a cultivated and a growing desire for an Adirondack reservation. The Adirondack survey and the comptrollers' office have been used to further that object; and finally the Senate committee have fixed the limits of the park and given it shape and form. Many thousands of dollars have already been spent in reaching this conclusion. Why if the Adirondack park was so important and necessary, did the

statesmen of the past fail to provide for it, and allow those virgin forests to be desecrated? The governor of the State—the superintendent of the Adirondack survey, and the Senate committee, assure us that the statesmen of the past were ignorant of the importance of such a park or they would never have thrown away the good gifts of Providence and adopted such a ruinous policy.

#### WHAT THE OLD POLICY HAS ACCOMPLISHED.

Such men as Archibald McIntyre, William L. Marcy, Silas Wright, Azariah C. Flagg, Millard Filmore, Sanford E. Church, and Lucius Robinson have had supervision of our Adirondack region and controlled the policy of our State in relation to it. These men had imbibed the idea and tried to carry it out in their official acts, that it was safe to trust the people of the State with the lands of the State. They believed in that way the desert and waste places might be reclaimed from their savage state and civilization be promoted, and the sum of human happiness increased. Let us consider what the old policy has accomplished. Less than two hundred years ago, the territory which is now proposed to be set apart as an Adirondack park was then, as it is now, larger than either the States of Rhode Island, Connecticut or Delaware. It was then an unbroken wilderness—civilized man had not then within its borders a habitation or a home. The red man of the forest built here his wigwam, and here found his hunting ground. The industrious beavers here, undisturbed, reared their young and built their huts and their dams. The moose with his companions roamed monarch of the forest, with none to molest or make afraid. As civilization has advanced these have all melted away and disappeared. Their works and their relics are often found, which teach the lesson that the places which once knew them shall know them no more forever.

If our scientists and statesmen, so well known to us for their inventive and progressive genius, had lived and controlled in the generations which are passed, the vast Adirondack wilderness would have remained unto this day in the same condition it was when Henry Hudson first sailed up the noble river which now bears his name. But a different policy has prevailed and a different result has been reached, and civilization in its onward march has penetrated even the Adirondack wilder-

ness, and where the forest once grew we now behold the waving grain. The cattle and the sheep may now be seen feeding upon a thousand hills — whole counties and towns and villages are now thriving and doing business within this Adirondack park; the solemn sound of the church-going bell, and the merry shouts of the children just released from school, are now echoed back from the mountains and the hill-sides; where was once the wigwam may now be seen the elegant mansion and the pleasant home, adorned with all the taste and refinement which the nineteenth century alone can furnish. From these homes have gone forth educated men and women to fill almost every position in life, in peace and in war, both in our own and in foreign lands.

Everywhere within this proposed Adirondack park is now heard the busy hum of industry. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are now invested in saw-mills and tanneries, in iron manufactories and pulp mills and factories of various kinds to convert the products of this region into tangible shape for the comfort and convenience of civilized man. The last census shows that there was, in those counties situated within or partly within what is proposed to be set aside as an Adirondack park, over five hundred thousand inhabitants — more people than the whole State contained within the memory of men still living. The last assessment-rolls showed that the lands in these counties were valued at over \$138,000,000 upon which the people paid taxes; besides they paid taxes upon over \$13,500,000 of personal property. This region has now its representatives in the Congress of the United States, and also in the Assembly and Senate of our own State.

#### SHALL THE OLD POLICY BE CHANGED?

These being some of the facts, the question for the people and their representatives to decide is, shall the State of New York have an Adirondack park? In determining this question it seems to me the first thing to be settled is, who and what interest requires that such a vast territory be purchased and maintained at the expense of the State as a public park.

#### WHO ARE IN FAVOR OF THE PARK.

It seems to me that all the real friends and abettors of this scheme can be put into two classes. I know that there are many



who are advocating a great State Adirondack park and are regarded as the friends of the measure who would not seem to belong to either of these classes. Their position can only be accounted for by understanding the tendency and weakness of human nature. There seems to be in the human species an inherent love of being humbugged. Barnum and the fashion makers have made fortunes by appealing to this weakness. The politician understands this principle, he knows that clap-trap is better than argument if he can once get it started. There were but few who really desired the death of our Savior but when the interested leaders pronounced against him they all with one accord cried out, "crucify him, crucify him." The Adirondack park scheme seems to me one of the most stupendous humbugs which ever received the attention and support of intelligent men. As I said before all its real friends and supporters can be found in two classes.

#### OFFICE SEEKERS DESIRE AN ADIRONDACK PARK.

One class is made up of those who believe that our State government ought to have a bureau or department whose especial business should be to take charge of and look after our forests and parks, with its commissioners, superintendents, and assistants; with its engineers, surveyors and draughtsmen; with its guides, foresters and rangers, with an office in the New Capitol at Albany, spacious and grand, fitted up and furnished with every convenience and luxury. Such a department would furnish employment for a large number, with good and certain pay. There are large numbers in our State who think themselves entirely competent and worthy of some position of small work and large pay and they are anxiously looking for such an opening, and when they can find no such chance waiting for them, they would like to have the law makers create such official position, and as a much larger number desire and expect office than ever realize their wishes, every measure for establishing new official positions, necessarily has very numerous supporters. It is wonderful how the State departments and their employees have increased within the last few years. A new State Capitol has been built at the cost of millions of dollars, covering three acres of land and one story has been piled upon another, and as fast as the workmen could

get the rooms ready some department has been ready to occupy them. We commenced our national existence by breaking away from Great Britain and one of the reasons our forefathers assigned was that the king "had erected a multitude of new offices and sent hither swarms of officers to harrass our people and eat out their substance." The whole tendency of our government as at present administered seems to be in the same direction. The demand for the increase of offices and the increase of salaries seems to have no limit.

#### SPORTSMEN DESIRE AN ADIRONDACK PARK.

The other class are men who have leisure and money, position and influence; they are satiated with the folly and fashion of society, they desire a change, and rest, they sigh:

"O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,  
Some boundless contiguity of shade:"

They imagine that if the State owned a great wilderness park that they could claim as a common inheritance and enjoy without restraint that they could find in such a retreat, away from the pomp and show of busy life, quiet and happiness in fishing and hunting such as they could not enjoy elsewhere. All this class of persons are active and vociferous in demanding the establishment of an Adirondack park.

#### THE FRIENDS OF THE PARK HAVE ONE MOTIVE, BUT ASSIGN QUITE ANOTHER.

Both of these classes who are urging and demanding the establishing of this great park have one motive and are assigning quite another and very different one, as will be readily seen by looking at the facts. They claim that there is a great necessity for preserving the water supply for the Erie and Champlain canals and the Hudson river. This they claim is, with them, the great underlying motive. What are the facts?

#### WHERE DO THE WATERS DRAIN FROM THIS PARK.

It will be seen by looking at the map of this great park as it has been located by the superintendent of the Adirondack survey and the Senate committee that the water from more than two-thirds of its water shed pass down the St. Lawrence river. What

good does that do to the canals or the Hudson river? Does the St. Lawrence need more water? The numerous ponds and lakes and streams in the Adirondack region are from one to two thousand feet above the level of the sea. Let us look for a moment and see what rivers find their source in this elevated Adirondack region and where they flow. The Black river, the Moose river, the Independence river, the Beaver river and the Oswegatchie river all flow west into Lake Ontario. The Grass river, the Rackett river, the St. Regis river flow north into the St. Lawrence and the Saranac and Ausable rivers pour their torrents into Lake Champlain. Lake George and Lake Champlain, which form the south-eastern boundary of the proposed Adirondack park, discharge their waters into the St. Lawrence, and even the waters from the center of the village of Glens Falls, situated upon the very banks of the Hudson, drain through Lake Champlain into the St. Lawrence, and also a part of the Hudson river itself is diverted by the State through the Glens Falls feeder into the Champlain canal and empties into the St. Lawrence. It is thus apparent that if the State should preserve the water supply of the proposed Adirondack park, that a large proportion of it could not be used for the State canals or the Hudson river.

#### HOW THE WATER SUPPLY MIGHT BE INCREASED.

If increasing our water supply and enlarging our chances for commerce and navigation were the real objects sought it would be a worthy public enterprise and entitled to the protection and support of our State or National government. If that were the real object it could be accomplished with great certainty of success.

#### PROFESSOR BENEDICT'S REPORT.

The Legislature of 1874 made an appropriation of \$7,500 for the purpose of making surveys and maps, and plans for damming the outlets of lakes and constructing reservoirs at the head waters of the Hudson river. Professor F. A. Benedict, who was formerly professor of mathematics and engineering in the University of Vermont, and who had for many years, by practical experience and scientific observation, made himself thoroughly familiar with this whole Adirondack region, was selected to superintend this

survey and report the result. That report will be found as a part of the report of Canal Commissioner Alexander Barkley for the year 1875 printed as Assembly Document No. 6. This report shows that dams could be built and reservoirs constructed at a moderate expense upon certain ponds and lakes which would feed into the Hudson river and which would hold as a reserve more than twenty four billions of cubic feet of water. The rains and melting snows of every spring would fill these reservoirs more than twice. The quantity thus stored would furnish an extra supply to the Hudson river for one hundred days each year of 167,149 cubic feet each minute. If the people of this State wished or needed a larger supply for the dry summer months, there are many other streams, which Professor Benedict did not have time to examine critically, which have their sources in the elevated mountain regions of the Adirondacks and which would fill large reservoirs and furnish immense supplies for the canals and the Hudson river. Let me mention some which the report of Professor Benedict does not pretend to estimate. East and West Canada creeks which are the principal sources of the Mohawk river, the Sacandaga river, the Boreas river, the Indian and Cedar rivers, all of which empty into the Hudson river. All of these streams are supplied from ponds and lakes and tributaries which are situated in the wildest regions of the Adirondacks with immense opportunities for the cheap and safe storage of surplus waters. This plan of Professor Benedict for increasing our water supply which was recommended by the canal commissioners and which was so practical and might be made so useful has failed to receive the approval of our Legislature or the friends of the Adirondack park.

If the people who are talking so much about the Adirondack wilderness and the Adirondack park really desired to prevent destructive spring freshets in the valley of the Hudson, and to secure an abundant supply of the cool and pure water so as to avoid the evils of low water during the summer months, the report of Professor Benedict shows the only feasible and practicable way that such a result can be accomplished.

#### THE ADIRONDACK SURVEY AND THE LUMBERMEN.

The Legislature has not been unmindful of this region — it has appropriated over \$70,000 for the Adirondack survey. This

survey has remeasured the heights of the mountains, cut several acres of valuable timber from the mountain tops, and surveyed and mapped the Adirondacks, and written long reports which have been printed into books, charging upon the lumber manufacturers the destruction of the Adirondack forests and the despoiling and laying waste that great wilderness.

All the friends of the great Adirondack park have joined in one immense howl against the lumbermen. The charges against the lumbermen which have been promulgated by office-seekers, aesthetes, and dudes, are as destitute of sense, as they are of truth.

#### THE LUMBERMEN PRESERVE INSTEAD OF DESTROY THE FOREST.

There are no other class of men half so much interested in the preservation of the Adirondack forests as the lumbermen, for they own most of them, and when you destroy the timber, you destroy all that is most valuable. The lumbermen in cutting out the timber from the forest, do not, on an average, cut one mature tree in twenty-five.

The Adirondack forests are made up to a large extent, of beech, birch and maple, of basswood, ash and elm, of balsam, cedar and tamarack, and very rarely do the lumbermen cut one of these trees.

In cutting the pine, spruce and hemlock, the lumbermen leave all the smaller growth untouched, and by taking out the mature trees, the smaller ones grow all the faster. Within the last ten or fifteen years, hundreds of thousands of large, green, beautiful black spruce trees in the Adirondack forest, which were suitable and proper for lumber, have died, and now their rotten and worthless trunks cover the ground or still stand as monuments of their former, but departed greatness. The lumbermen have saved some of them, but most of them have become worthless and gone to decay. The State botanists thinks death has been caused by a little parasite grub which, inside the soft bark, girdles the trees; others, accustomed to these forests, think that the grub is the result of the death instead of the cause, and they believe that death has come to such a large number of these trees as the result of full maturity and old age; others believe that these trees, as they have grown larger and older, absorb and require more moisture, and the long, dry summers which we have had, left these trees without sufficient moisture, and therefore they died.

As we go through the primitive forests in any direction, we find everywhere the dead and prostrate trees going to destruction. There is nothing in the vegetable or animal kingdoms which has ever been able to escape old age and death. Long before America was discovered, or the lumberman had laid his axe at the root of the tree, these forests showed evidence of death and decay.

So slight is the destruction made by the lumbermen, that any one may float out upon any of the lakes or ponds in the Adirondack region and look off upon the mountains and the hillsides and behold the verdure and beauty of those grand old forests, and no one unacquainted can tell whether the destroying axe of the lumberman has been through that forest or not. It is a most ridiculous folly for any one to pretend that our water supply from the Adirondacks will be better preserved by preventing the mature trees from being cut.

Who does not know that large trees are very active agents in absorbing moisture from the earth, and that from every tree there is an evaporation constantly going on from every leaf and branch? Who that wishes to secure to his lawn a heavy turf, green and fresh, would allow all the grass and vegetables growing upon it to go to seed? The heaviest turf and the greenest grass is always found where the lawn is mowed the oftenest.

The laws of the vegetable kingdom are constant and immutable — what is true of the grass of the fields is equally true of the forest. Experience shows that where the Adirondack wilderness has been saved from the devastating effects of forest fires, that the young trees will mature and furnish a new crop of valuable lumber every twenty-five or thirty years. The lumbermen would like to hold and protect these lands which have been lumbered if the State authorities would protect them in their just rights.

#### THE EXAMPLE OF THE STATE OF MAINE.

The State of Maine furnishes a practical illustration of the effect of forest growth. Some thirty or forty years ago it was thought that the lumber of that State was nearly exhausted; intelligent provisions were made to protect the forests from fires, and since that time the lumber from Maine has been found, every year, in every port upon the Atlantic, and, it is said upon

good authority, that there is now in Maine more uncut lumber than there was thirty years ago.

It has seemed strange to me, and unaccountable, that the Legislature and the State officers and so many intelligent men should have joined in denouncing the lumbermen as the ruthless destroyers of the virgin forests, as being supremely selfish, as the enemies of the health and wealth and business and commerce of the State, and asking and demanding that special laws be passed to put a check to their nefarious business.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF LUMBER BUSINESS.

These men seem not to realize that lumber is one of the great industries of the United States. No other business has larger investments or employs more men. It is carried on in every State and Territory. In 1880 there was invested in mills for sawing of the lumber \$181,186,122, and this part of the business gave employment to 141,561 men, and there was produced over eighteen billions or eighteen thousand million feet of sawed lumber, and there has not been less produced any year since. This would be equal to more than three hundred and sixty feet for every man, woman and child in the United States. Our own State stands as the third State in the quantity produced, mostly from the Adirondacks. There was in this State in 1880, 2,822 different saw-mills, in which were invested over thirteen millions of dollars, in which were employed over eleven thousand men, to whom were paid annually over two millions of dollars, and produced over a thousand million feet of sawed lumber.

There is no enterprise which marks the progress of civilization more than the lumber business. Instead of the wigwam of the Indian, and the tent of the Arabs, we have, by the use of lumber, elegant palaces and homes finished and furnished with all the luxury and comforts of civilized life. Millions of lumber are used every year in preparing our goods, wares and merchandise for transportation by domestic and foreign commerce.

Take from our houses and our business the lumber which has been gathered from the forests, and you deprive them of all which is most useful, elegant and attractive, and move backward for centuries the progress of civilization. And if it is necessary to stop cutting timber in our State, why not in other States as well?

And still the cry goes up against cutting the Adirondack forest; still the echo reverberates demanding an Adirondack park; and still the question seems unsettled among its friends as to the best manner to secure the lands desired.

#### HOW CAN THE LANDS BE BEST SECURED FOR A PARK.

The friends are divided as to the best means to be used to secure for the State the territory desired. One party believes that the freezing out process, or in other words, confiscation can be made most effective in securing to the State lands sufficient to establish such a park.

This process has been going on for a number of years under the manipulations of the tax department in the comptroller's office.

Ten years ago the State owned in this region only about thirty-eight thousand acres; it now owns more than seven hundred and fifty thousand acres. The State, by its recent and unjust policy, has compelled its citizens who have owned lands in this region, and upon which they have paid thousands of dollars of taxes, to surrender, without compensation, their title to the State.

The Senate committee assure us that the State lands thus acquired "are far more valuable than had been supposed."

#### THE CONFISCATION PLAN.

For any government to confiscate the lands and property of its citizens is a policy which ought to be entered upon with grave misgivings. It sometimes has been adopted as a punishment for disloyalty by the victorious party. Who can read Longfellow's Evangeline, and justify the British government in banishing the Acadians from the homes of their childhood? Who is there in the light of history that can look at the confiscation of the property and the banishment of the Tories of our Revolution without wishing that it had not been so?

#### THE LOYALTY OF THE ADIRONDACK REGION.

But there has been no disloyalty in the Adirondack region to justify such treatment. During the last war no people could be more loyal. A call from the government was responded to like the shrill whistle of Roderick Dhu, when in an

"Instant through copse and heath arose  
Bonnets, and spears, and bended bows."



Everywhere in this region the republican shibboleth was that the "rebellion must be put down, regardless of expense," and that was the watch-word and the prevailing sentiment. The democrats, in order that their loyalty might not be distrusted, took the lead in voting bounties and expenses. I know of one town which is located within what is proposed as the Adirondack park, which voted a tax for a single year of thirty-three per cent on its whole valuation, and that was not on a small valuation. I knew of a large tract of non-resident land in that town which was valued on the assessment-roll for double the highest price that it had ever, or could be sold for. This town, in addition to its heavy tax, also issued war bonds, the amount of which has never yet been known, as the officer issuing the bonds forgot to enter the amount on the stubs, and has delayed even, until this day, to break the unwelcome intelligence to his constituents; but year after year regularly executed bonds make their appearance, demanding payment, and are paid.

Whenever there was a call made for more troops the people came forward in all this region, and voted the most liberal bounties. They were willing that the bounty-jumper should be most richly paid if he would only put down the rebellion. They were willing to pour out their money like water, especially as the owners of non-resident lands had the most of it to pay. Even those who were drafted to fill up the army, but paid their money instead of serving upon the tented field, had their money refunded to them, and the amount made a tax upon the town. Some of these towns, with but few inhabitants, have an easy way to raise large sums of money — they assess the non-resident lands, return them to the State comptroller's office and get their money.

#### THE STATE LANDS IN THE PRESENT AND THE PAST.

In relation to our State lands let us contrast the policy of the present with the policy of the past. At the time our State government was formed most of the territory within our borders, by the right of eminent domain, belonged to the State. The policy which was first adopted, and practiced for many years afterward, was to sell as many of these lands as possible, so that the sale and taxes would furnish a revenue to the State, and so as to

have as many of the citizens as possible interested in using, improving and taking care of these lands. The growth and greatness of our State is, to a large extent, the result of that policy. Every inducement was offered to the citizens to purchase these lands. Any of these lands could be purchased at a small price by paying down one-fourth of the purchase-money and six per cent interest on the balance. In this way many pieces, and parcels, and tracts of land were purchased by men not only for themselves, but as an inheritance for their children.

#### THE PROTECTION OF THE STATE.

The State reserved the right of protecting its purchasers from injustice and wrong by authorizing the State comptroller to reject all taxes when the lands had been valued too high. You can find through all the old books in the comptroller's office "Taxes rejected for excessive valuation." School districts were not allowed to levy taxes upon lands unless they were within three miles of the school-house. Local road taxes were not allowed to be assessed except for the improvement of roads leading through or to the lands assessed. If the owner of the land did not wish to work the tax he could be exempt by paying seventy-five cents for each day's work. In this way non-resident land-owners were protected from unjust taxation by the local governments.

#### THE ROBBERY OF LAND-OWNERS AUTHORIZED.

But recently a different class of men with different ideas have got control of our State government. Not unfrequently the lands of non-residents are put on the assessment-rolls at excessive valuation. I have known the valuation raised, where the lands were entirely unproductive and unchanged, three hundred per cent in a single year. I know of towns in this region where the inhabitants have gone on and settled the most desirable lands, cleared and improved them, built houses and barns, factories and villages, and when the assessors came to make their valuation for the purpose of taxation, the mountains and deserts of the non-resident lands were valued more per acre than the inhabited and improved parts of the town. It is not unfrequent that school-houses are built, and schools maintained year after year, and non-

resident lands ten, fifteen and sometimes twenty miles from the school-house assessed for that purpose. In all the towns there is a poll or road-district tax upon the non-resident lands without any reference to there being any highway to or through the territory. This tax amounts usually to three per cent annually on the whole valuation. The residents can satisfy their tax by working on the highway, or by paying a dollar for each day's work; but when returned to the comptroller's office the non-resident has to pay one dollar and fifty cents for each day's work assessed. All the taxes against non-resident lands, including town, county and State, road districts and school district taxes are returned annually to the comptroller's office, and the State treasurer is drawn on for the amount. The comptroller adds ten per cent annual interest, and charges for advertising and sale. The charges frequently amount to more than the original taxes. These non-resident lands may have been bought and held in the family, and taxes paid upon them for forty or fifty years; misfortune, sickness or death may have invaded the family; but the State officers and the law have no pity; if these charges are not paid to the last farthing the lands are lost, and the State gets the title. I have known a good many cases of ambitious, active, energetic men, doing a good business and desiring to secure timbered land for future use, who have bought up large townships and tracts of non-resident lands; but the taxes were allowed to so increase and multiply that the profits of a good business would not pay these taxes, and such men have been compelled to succumb, give up their business, and go to the wall and allow their lands to be sold for taxes against them. At the last tax sale the comptroller went back for forty years, and took up the taxes rejected by his predecessors, and added them with their ten per cent yearly interest to the non-resident lands. By such proceedings, in such ways, authorized by the laws of our modern solons, has the State taken from the rightful owners, its own citizens, within the last ten years more than seven hundred thousand acres of land, and thus exempting that amount of property from taxation, leaving the adjoining lands hereafter to bear all the burdens. The State officers, and some of their abettors, imagine that they have accomplished a smart and wise thing. If some piece of non-resident land has at any time within the last thirty, forty or fifty years, by

mistake or accident, escaped taxation, the chief of the tax department will cause the tax to be put back on the land with ten per cent annual interest, and the unlucky owner has got to pay it or lose his land. But on the other hand, if a man buys a piece of land, and pays taxes on it all these years, when he comes to look for his lands he many times finds no such lands in the town or county where he bought it, and has been paying taxes on it. He then asks to have his money refunded by the State, but the chief of the tax department assures him that the laws do not allow money refunded unless such as have been paid within the last six years, and then interest for only six per cent on the amount paid. So reads the law which has been enacted on the suggestion of the chief of the tax department. Our modern comptrollers seem not to have adopted the old maxim that "what is sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander."

The *Albany Evening Journal*, and others of the same kidney, who depend upon their imagination for their facts, boldly charge that the "lumber interests have resisted the Adirondack reservation because it is likely to deprive them of the lands on which they have trespassed for years, and from which they have earned a profit at the expense of the State." The real truth is that twenty years ago the State owned no lands in the Adirondack region. The seven hundred and fifty thousand acres of which the friends of the great park now so frequently boast as belonging to the State, is made up entirely of lands seized by the State officers, and wrenched by oppression and unjust laws from the citizens of the State without paying the real owners one dollar for their lands. The comptroller has for years had his salaried officers traversing the Adirondack forests, looking after delinquents who might have trespassed upon the State lands, but there has no instance yet been heard of where any lumber manufacturer has been found guilty of trespassing upon the State lands. Heretofore, if the owner of lands by accident or inability forfeited his title, the lands were restored to him on his reimbursing the State for all its expenses.

#### THE LEGISLATIVE AND SENATE COMMITTEE.

But the Legislature of 1883, passed, with a great flourish of trumpets, a law prohibiting the State from disposing of any lands

in the Adirondack region. The Senate committee appointed that year, while rejoicing over the large amount of lands acquired by the State, say in their report to the Legislature that "if this rate of increase continues, we shall soon become possessed of sufficient lands without any expense to the State." This committee denounces the State officers of the past for their "deplorable management of the public lands." The superintendent of the Adirondack survey protests against the sale of lands in that region, as he claims that "the history of the land office shows that such sales have been unprofitable to the State." The governor in his annual message says "the interests of the State have not been cared for in the years that have passed, and because our forest laden lands have been recklessly disposed of at nominal prices, until at this late day we are awakened to the fact that the control which the State should always have maintained over that part of those lands, which are important to the preservation of our streams, has been to a large extent surrendered." We must have a great abundance of wise men in these latter days, or there would not be so many "Daniel's come to judgment." No one can read the report of the Senate committee and their proposed law without feeling that the committee were more anxious for a great Adirondack sporting park than on account of any water-shed. In describing their journey through the wilderness, they say in their report, "it is impossible to appreciate the extraordinary extent of the hotel business and summer travel in this region." They also say that "along their route they found the hotels everywhere thronged with guests." The committee further say as they passed down Long lake, "their little fleet of boats received courteous salutes from several picturesque camps located upon the shores of the lakes." And with evident pride they report that "the belief that the State authorities had at last awakened to the importance of the preservation of its Adirondack forests everywhere created enthusiasm." As they proceeded on their way they report that "in different directions they found parties camping upon and occupying State lands and cutting timber at will." They say that "they found many wealthy citizens spending their summer in this wilderness for health and recreation."

They also report that "in many famous localities they found the same throng of travelers and accounts of the danger which threat-

ened the State forests from the increasing demand for lumber." At one locality this committee had "a very pleasant reception given them by the residents of New York city." Such were some of the observations of the committee. And as a part of their report they proposed a law to be placed upon the statute books.

This law fixes the boundaries of a great park, and says to civilization thus far canst thou come and no further — all within are sacred grounds. This law establishes a commissioner and numerous officers, but it says not a word against camping in the forests, or upon the lakes, rivers or streames within this park. This law says not a word against setting fires, or about penalties, or about the damages which may be caused by such fires. This law says not a word about marauding and amateur hunters and fishermen peeling the butts of green trees for bark shanties, although thousands of such trees are killed in that way every year. This law says not a word against chopping down the forest and leaving it to rot and decay upon the ground. But this law is particularly savage against any lumberman who may mistake the line of his lot, and chop over on to the State lands and remove the timber. The penalty for such an offense is \$50 for every tree thus cut, and imprisonment if not paid.

#### WHAT THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PROPOSE.

There is another plan for the State getting control of the Adirondack wilderness. This plan is advanced by the Chamber of Commerce of the city of New York. It proposes to appropriate a large sum of money to buy up the wilderness. The plan is to seize that whole region by the right of eminent domain as a public necessity, and condemn it and have it appraised, and pay the owners the price at which it may be appraised. The difference of these two plans correspond with the two different ways of being robbed. In one case a gang comes upon you too powerful to be resisted, and by choking you takes away from you your money and your valuables. In the other case a man meets you in a dark wood and holding a loaded revolver to your head says, "your money or your life," you surrender all you have, and he hands you back what his generosity may think you entitled to receive. If I should be compelled to choose between the two plans for securing sufficient lands for an Adirondack park, I should prefer what the Chamber of Commerce proposes.

### THE PLAN THAT OUGHT TO BE ADOPTED.

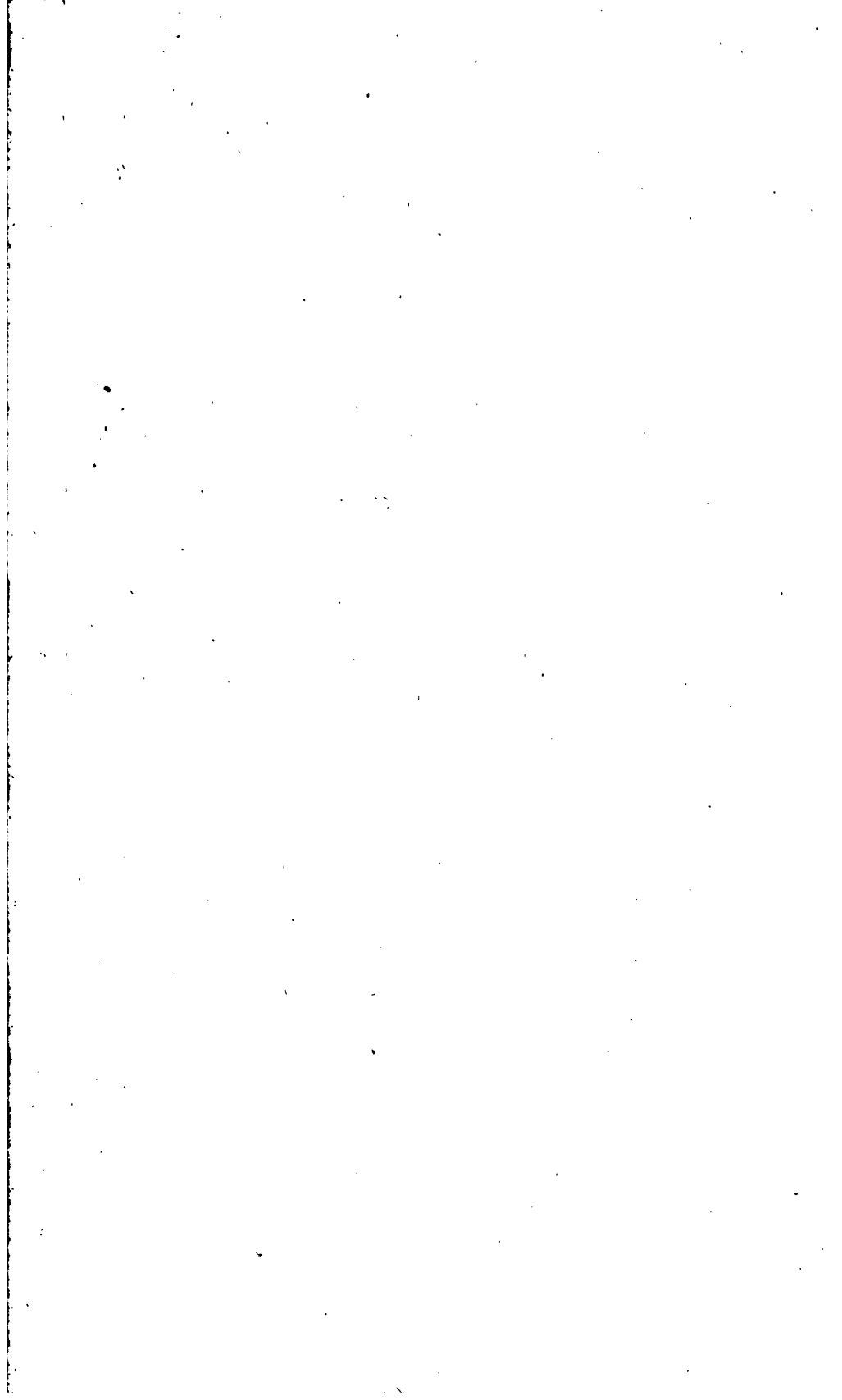
After studying carefully the question of an Adirondack park or reservation, and considering fully all the facts for and against such a measure, it seems to me that the establishment of such a park would not accomplish any thing toward preserving the forests, or continuing or increasing the water supply for the Hudson river and the Erie canal, but it would fasten upon the State a very large and an increasing expense which would be a burden upon the tax payers for all time to come.

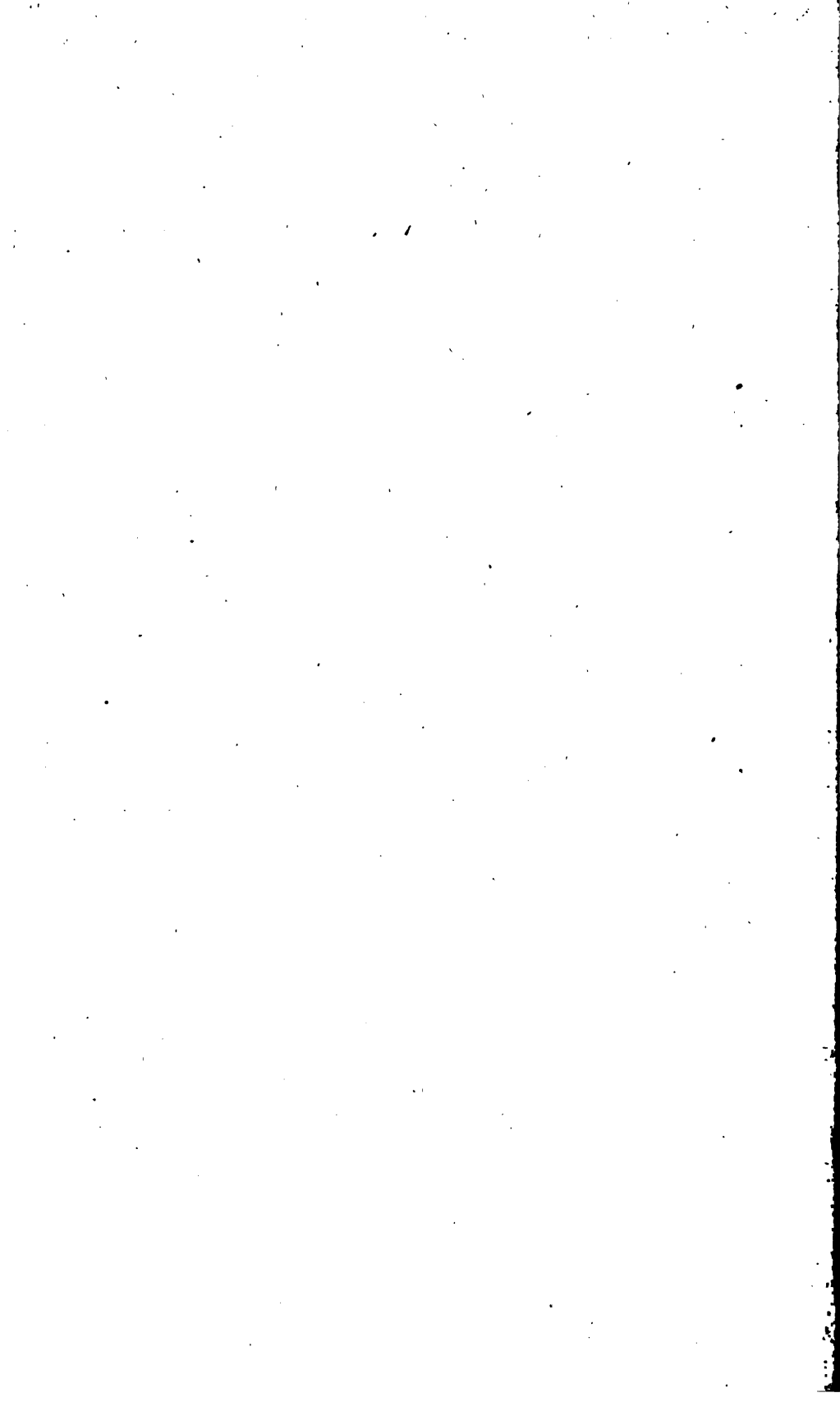
There cannot be any doubt but the head waters of the Hudson and the Mohawk rivers is a region of vast importance to the Empire State, and by the proper use and preservation of that section it may be made to contribute immensely to the health and business and commerce of the whole State. Its great elevation above the sea secures a cool atmosphere which results in deep snows and a very large rainfall every year. After the most careful and accurate observation it is believed that the yearly water supply is not less than five feet on an average.

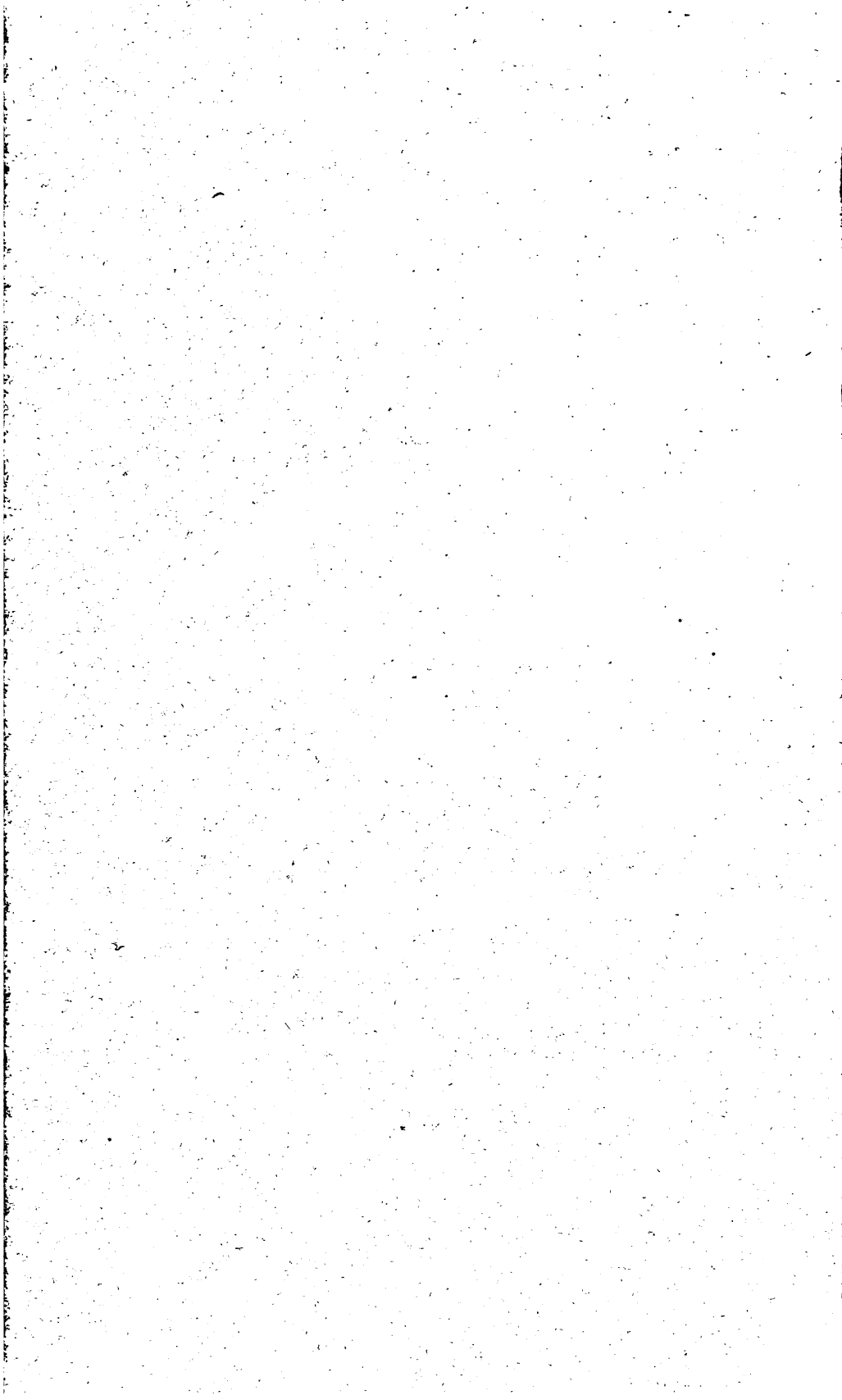
This whole region is of the primitive geological formation ; the light soil is everywhere underlaid with stones, rocks and gravel, so that the water absorption is very small, and the atmosphere being always cool, the evaporation is very limited. Neither the soil nor the climate seems to favor agriculture or make it profitable, but every condition seems to favor the growth of forest trees. All the ponds and lakes are surrounded and hemmed in by hills and mountains which make it cheap and easy to construct dams and secure deep water and prevent the flowage of large areas of country. And as evaporation takes place according to the surface and not according to the quantity of water, there is no other place in the world better adapted for reservoirs for the storing of water. If the Legislature and the people of our State would give up the idea of a large public park and a sporting ground—if they would pass laws to prevent unjust taxation upon the lands in the Adirondack region ; and also pass stringent laws against putting out fires, punishing the guilty parties with fines and making them liable for all damages which may result from such fires ; and also make it the duty of the game and fish protectors, who are appointed by the governor, and who draw their salaries from the

State treasury, to prevent as far as possible the spread of forest fires, and to bring to condign punishment all who may be guilty of starting such fires ; if in addition to this, the Legislature would adopt the recommendations of Professor Benedict, and enter upon an intelligent system of reservoirs, the blessings which would result would be immensely greater than the expense. Instead of having on the Hudson river, devastating freshets, such as have swept down the valley of the Ohio river, our great reservoirs would be filled up when we would otherwise have freshets ; and by the time the snows were melted the natural flow of all the streams would be on their way to the ocean, and by the time that the summer drouths commenced, these great reservoirs would be pouring out their sweet and crystal waters to make glad the valley of the Hudson and to supply trade and commerce with all it might need or require.













3 2044 102 886 454

